

A Million Pictures



Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefacts in the Common European History of Learning

Newsletter # 12 | Dec 2017

When the year comes to its close, it is traditionally a time to reflect on achievements and make plans for the future. In this newsletter, we will celebrate Lucerna's 25,000th uploaded scan for an image and the development of this database in the last two years of our project.

But we also have sad news: Mervyn Heard, enthusiast lanternist, collector and researcher passed away in November, peacefully after a long illness. Mervyn was very eager to contribute his expertise as performer and researcher to the Million Pictures project, but had to cancel his participation in our workshop series and conference due to his ill health.

Mervyn was the leading British magic lantern performer of the past several decades; a celebrated showman world-wide; a respected researcher and author on many and varied topics; a former Chairman of our Associated Partner the Magic Lantern Society (MLS); editor of the MLS Newsletter; and the driving force behind the e-letter *New Light on Old Media* to which many of us subscribe. As a scholar, performer and person he was generous, thoughtful, always stimulating company and fun to be around. The MLS plans a tribute to Mervyn at its spring meeting in London in April, and also in a forthcoming issue of its journal *The Magic Lantern*. It's an understatement to say that he will be greatly missed; the world of the lantern, and entertainment and scholarship in general, is much the poorer for Mervyn's departure.

In this newsletter

From the Project Coordination	2
Project News	3
Project News: Lucerna	5
Series: Favourite Slides	7
News from other projects	9
Laura Minici Zotti about her career and the Precinema museum	10
The lanternist as media archaeologist	12
Editorial and About	14

From the Project Coordination

In January 2018, our yearly report to our funders will be due. We will present you a resume of our 2017 project activities in the next newsletter.

In the meantime, we wish all of you a great festive season and some restful days in nice company at the end of the year. And, of course, a good start of 2018!



Image taken from Lucerna

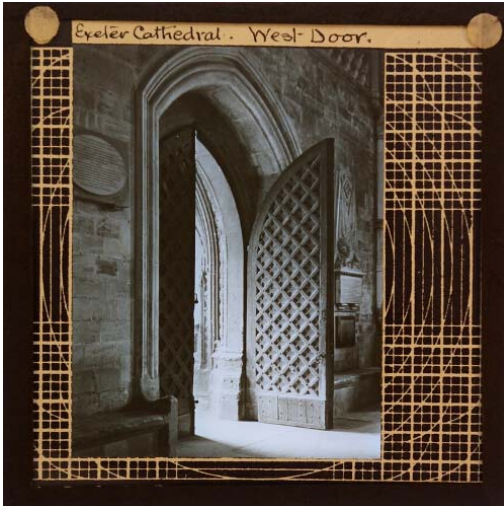
www.slides.uni.trier.de/slide/index.php?id=5002660

Short notes, images, articles, questions, requests, comments on this newsletter and more are highly welcomed! Please send them per e-mail to Sarah Dellmann: s.dellmann [at] uu.nl
Any items for the next newsletter should be submitted by

26 January 2018

Project News

In the **fourth and last workshop** of our series, held from **11-13 January** in



Exeter, UK, we will look back on the achievements of the projects and the lessons we learned in the course of the years of cooperation.

We will also look ahead and set the research agenda and prioritize tasks for future research into magic lanterns, slides, their preservation and the contexts of their use. We will also discuss how we can maintain the network of artists, researchers, archivists and curators

which *A Million Pictures* brought together for cultural heritage research.

Everyone is welcome to join us for discussions and presentations on all aspects of lantern slide use in educational contexts, plus reflections from the project teams and thoughts on how we should build on the excellent progress made in the course of the project. There is no charge for attendance, and the evening events are included for workshop participants, but if you are interested please contact Richard Crangle (r.crangle@googlemail.com) and Joe Kember (j.e.kember@exeter.ac.uk) from the Team Exeter.

See the programme online: <http://a-million-pictures.wp.hum.uu.nl/workshop-4/>

After the success of our conference in August, we have decided to **publish the proceedings** and are happy to announce that we have an agreement with the editors of the *KINtop*-series, Frank Kessler, Sabine Lenk and Martin Loiperdinger and the publisher, John Libbey. The book is scheduled for Fall 2018. It will include not only the scholarly papers presented during the conference, but also a "lab section" dedicated to archival and museum issues, examples of re-use and other aspects linked to work with and on magic lantern slides. The volume will be edited by Sarah Dellmann and Frank Kessler.



Nele Wynants from the research team Antwerp has **published the essay**

“Spectral Illusions. Ghostly Presence in Phantasmagoria Shows” in *Framing Immersive Theatre and Performance. The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance*, edited by James Frieze, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 207-220. For more information on the book, visit the publisher’s website:

<http://www.palgrave.com/de/book/9781137366030> .

Early Popular Visual Culture has a free review copy. If you are interested, contact Leonoor Kuijk: l.kuijk@ugent.be .



The exhibition [Light. The magic lantern and digital imaging](#) is still open until the

end of January at Museu del Cinema in Girona. Local, regional and national papers have reported on the exhibition or events related to it. *El Punt Diari* published a full page article about life models. There have been also some international articles online, like this one in Photoconsortium ([read it here](#)).

Also the exhibition had some parallel activities like a [children magic lantern show by Jordi Pujades](#), a [guided visit](#) to the exhibition by Jordi Pons (director of

the Museum) and a [conference](#) about the fantascop found and preserved in Girona and the uses of magic lantern in secondary education in XIX Century Spain by Daniel Pitarch. The favourable response to the exhibition and the press coverage indicate the broad interest with which these activities were met. Congratulations!



Project News: Lucerna


By now, you will all be familiar with Lucerna, the database that is at the core of *A Million Pictures*. (<https://slides.uni-trier.de/>). In the course of *A Million Pictures*, this web resource has developed enormously.

Two years ago, the number of individually listed slides was at 100,000 – in the last two years this number increased by more than 20%, to 122,000. While two years ago, in [Newsletter 2](#), we celebrated the 13,000th of the listed slides that were illustrated by a digital image, we have doubled this in the last two years to 26,000. In Newsletter 2, the history of Lucerna until December 2015 is described in some detail, so here is what has happened since then.

More detailed searches

The Lucerna database currently contains records for:

- **8,162** [slide sets](#) comprising over **226,200** slides
- ... of which **100,438** individual [slides](#) have been listed – including **13,321** with images
- **4,311** [people](#) connected with the magic lantern
- **1,537** [organisations](#) (companies, institutions and other groups) connected with the magic lantern
- **6,217** lantern-related [events](#) (shows, exhibitions, historical events etc.)
- **7,723** [locations](#) (cities and towns, villages, individual addresses)
- **138** items of lantern [hardware](#) and other artefacts
- private and public [collections](#) of magic lantern material
- **9,789** [texts](#) connected with the magic lantern
- subject and other [keywords](#) to help with searching



Slide showing explosion at coal mine

Detail of a Screen shot from the Search page of Lucerna, 2 December 2015...

Lucerna's 10th anniversary happened to be during our 3rd workshop in Antwerp, in October 2016. During its anniversary, the foundations for Lucerna Community Interest Company were laid. Lucerna CIC is the formal institution that runs Lucerna and gave it a formal status. In November 2016, a Lucerna Hackathon and Expert meeting took place to implement new insights from the Million Pictures project to the web resource, among them the beta-version of a multi-lingual interface, the matching of vocabulary used in the database and new definitions for lantern genres.

With *A Million Pictures*, the database will be used on a greater scale. It proved not only to be a great tool for the documentation of slides for researchers but also for small and medium-sized museums. Our partners at Royal Albert Memorial Museum Exeter (UK), for example, used the “collection” option to document their lantern slides.

Search the Lucerna database


Quick search
Enter a word, name or group of characters, then click the 'Go' button
(if you already know the Lucerna ID number of a specific item you want, you can enter it here)

Go >>


More detailed searches

The Lucerna database currently contains records for:

- **9,159** [slide sets](#) comprising over 265,400 slides...
- ... of which **122,799** individual [slides](#) have been listed – including **26,592** with images
- **5,074** [people](#) connected with the magic lantern
- **1,657** [organisations](#) (companies, institutions and other groups) connected with the magic lantern
- **6,469** lantern-related [events](#) (shows, exhibitions, historical events etc.)
- **9,486** [locations](#) (cities and towns, villages, individual addresses)
- **161** items of lantern [hardware](#) and other artefacts
- private and public [collections](#) of magic lantern material
- **10,129** [texts](#) connected with the magic lantern
- subject and other [keywords](#) to help with searching



Slide showing soldier to illustrate song



Slide showing Arctic explorers

... and the same page, two years later

The manuals on how to add metadata and images will be finalised during our last workshop in Exeter. If you like to learn more about cataloguing your collection in Lucerna, please contact Sarah Dellmann. All contributions are welcome, also after *A Million Pictures* ends.

To keep track, check the numbers at the “Search” page of Lucerna at <https://slides.uni-trier.de/options.php>

We wish Lucerna a growing future!

Series: Favourite Slide

In every newsletter, members of the research team or our partners share their fascination with lantern slides by pointing to (one of) their favourite source. In this newsletter, the floor is to Sarah Dellmann.



Slide C8 “afd. Buikslooterham. Zwemclub” of set [Ons huis – Series C]. Courtesy: EYE Film Institute Netherlands. Digital image: <https://slides.uni-trier.de/slide/index.php?id=5106504>

I have hesitated long which of the slides I digitised really is my favourite one. This slide comes from what definitely is my favourite sub-collection: a box at EYE Film Institute Netherlands that was on the shelf just next to the slides of European countries that I actually came for. The slide belonged to the

association *Ons Huis* (“Our House”), which was set up in Amsterdam in 1891 by reformer Helen Mercier with the aim to bring education and culture to women and working class people.

The slides in this box document that *Ons Huis* organised holiday activities, women’s groups, a library, sewing lessons and more (search “Ons Huis” in Lucerna and you will find them all). The slides apparently come from different sets and, as visible on the label, were re-organised before they were donated to EYE Film Institute Netherlands.

The slides document people who were not often photographed, engaged in group activities. Everyone took pains to look neat and good, despite worn-off clothes and bad shoes.

Take this slide: “Division Buiksloterham. Swimming Club”. Despite the limited means, there is much effort and planning put into the presentation. The fact that they were photographed, their poses and their look into the camera all install them as people who matter. Did they see themselves on the slides in projection? How did it feel, seeing oneself projected on a big screen? At the simple swimming pool (the rainwater is directed into the pool), the instructor wears an ironed blouse and a tie – this seems not really a good choice for working clothes of a swim trainer but it actually *is* a good choice to convey dignity and aspiration. But who are the woman in the rain coat and the man in the suit? The boys, all of an age where I would expect them to do nonsense, especially in front of a camera, look very seriously and keep their pose although it does not seem to be particularly warm (look at their shoulders). In preparation of the photo shooting, someone had produced a board with the date: 28.8.21 and the name of the club, with great care for the writing of the letters. This photo captures pride and the wish to (be) document(ed); at the same time, the poses of the people in the picture do not breathe self-confidence. It is this mix of pride and uncertainty that captivates me. Even the man in suit is leaning to the side.

What did the swimming club mean to them?

Sarah Dellmann is Postdoctoral Researcher at Utrecht University and coordinates the Million Pictures Project. E-Mail: s.dellmann@uu.nl

News from other Projects:

Patrice Guérin announces the imminent release of the first volume of a **series of books on Molteni** (in French). Number one is devoted to “devices and



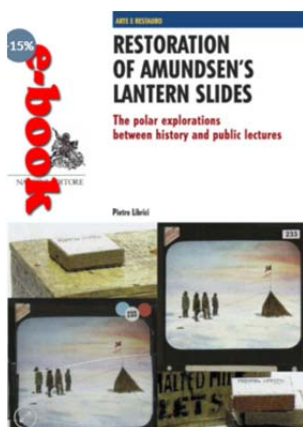
accessories”. The book series on Maison MOLTENI, then RADIGUET & MASSIOT, will consist of 4 volumes, the other three will be dedicated to

slides and slide sets/conferences (expected 2019), Family and Home (planned 2021) and projection lighting.

The first volume has 340 pages, richly illustrated. You can acquire it at a **special subscription price for 45 Euros** via <http://diaprojection.unblog.fr/publications/> or directly to Patrice Guérin, e-mail: diaprojection@orange.fr.

A **conservation workshop for 35mm slides** (in German language) will be held on 18 and 19 January at Kunsthalle Hamburg. The workshop combines discussions with hands-on sessions. For more information, contact Barbara Sommermeyer (sommermeyer@hamburger-kunsthalle.de)

Nino, **Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO)**, made available slides from the collection of Prof. F.M.Th. de Liagre Böhl online. Liagre-Böhl was professor of Assyriology at Leiden University and Co-Director of NINO 1939-1955. He used them to illustrate his university and public lectures. Many are photographs that he took on his journeys in Egypt (1920's), Iraq (1932 and 1939), and Iran (1939). More info: <http://www.nino-leiden.nl/collections/de-liagre-bohl-glass-slides>



A book on **technical restoration of lantern slides** with a case study on a set on Amundsen's polar expedition is available. The e-book is available for 15 Euro and covers the treatment of various materials in the restoration process. <http://www.nardineditore.it/prodotto/restoration-of-amundsens-lantern-slides-the-polar-explorations-between-history-and-public-lectures/>

Laura Minici Zotti about her lantern career and the museum of Precinema in Padua

I found my first magic lantern in the attic of my home in Venice. It probably



belonged to one of my ancestors. The first image that I projected was the “Woman with Candle”. This slide is the symbol of my Museum and it has never been omitted from my magic lantern shows.

A friend told me about the Magic Lantern Society which had been recently formed in London. My son Alberto and I soon joined. On that occasion I meet Janet Tamblin and

Mike Bartley, they gave a private performance just for us. I have never seen such a wonderful show, I consider them my teachers. Bill and John Barnes and other dear friends introduced me to a lot of fundamental ideas.

Almost from the start, I used a biunial lantern made by J.H. Steward. Then I went to London where I bought a triunial lantern at an auction, and in a very short time my collection began to grow into what it is today: the Museo del Precinema in Padua.



Moving slide Rialto Bridge, Venice, c. 1870

My first show was in 1975 in Lucca at International Animated Film Festival. I have a clear philosophy: the shows must be made only with original lanterns and slides. Modern reproductions will never give the poetry of the true magic lantern show. Typical of my approach was an entertainment based on the life of Casanova. I read the biography of Casanova and next, I looked among the thousands of slides in my collection to select 140 images which would help to recreate the story. I have created other shows dedicated to the Grand Tour in Italy, Princess Sissi, astronomy, and a Fantasmagoria. Among the more unusual things I did was to use insects and fish for projection. In the USA, I went in search of ants in the park of George Eastman House.

During my performing career I've been around the world with my shows. I also received many awards, including the Award for Culture from the President of the Italian Republic in 2009 and the Jean Mitry Award in Pordenone during the Silent Film Festival in 2008.

Twenty years ago, I founded the Museo del Precinema in Padua. I am involved



with its direction every day. I continue to give lectures and arrange exhibitions. I'm 83 now and my son Alberto, Professor of Cinema and Photography at the University of Padua, has taken on the commitment to preserve my collection. I see the Museum as my personal legacy.

This text is a dramatically abridged version of an interview that was published first in The Magic Lantern, the journal of the Magic Lantern Society UK and Europe. The interview was conducted by Jeremy Brooker.

Big Slide from Polytechnical Institution

For more information on the collection, see the website of Museo del Precinema - Collezione Minici Zotti: www.miniczotti.it

The lanternist as media-archaeologist

By Sabine Lenk

Recently a very well-known lanternist died. It was Mervyn Heard, one of United Kingdom's foremost collectors and a savant on the lantern as an artistic medium. We had invited him to the AMP workshop in Antwerp in October 2016. A week before he had to cancel his trip for health reasons. We didn't know that his body was already so affected by cancer that a year later we would have to grieve for him.

Mervyn Heard was known over the whole world for his many spectacular shows, evoking often the Victorian tradition of the Gothic Magic Lantern Show



Mervyn Heard setting up the lantern

with phantasmagoria effects as ghost-raising and shocking close-ups of skeleton faces and furious nuns. Storytelling was one of his great talents, and he moved his audience with his sense for dramatic moments, his acting skills and his wonderful hand-painted images and mechanical moving slides which carry people away in his artistic shows.

Why do I mention him in this AMP newsletter which is devoted to documentary slides and “sober” teaching of facts and not fiction? I want to recall the importance of these showmen and showwomen who prepared the ground for the growing interest in non-fictional lantern slides we see today in many archives and museums.

After the turn of the century (1900) the magic lantern had definitely lost its magic, it was disregarded and just considered worthy to make children laugh and cry. Once it turned into a children's toy, the projection lantern disappeared as a serious form of entertainment from the big theatre stages. It continued as a research instrument and didactic tool behind the doors of public and private schools and the walls of academic institutions until in the 1960s the last professors gave up teaching with glass plates and turned instead to diapositives.

As the public career of lantern entertainment had ended at the beginning of the 20th century, the tradition was long lost when young talents such as Laura Minici-Zotti from Italy and Mervyn Heard came in contact with the magic lantern. Laura was motivated by a slide collection and a lantern found on the attic of her grandmother's house; in 1969 Mervyn read an article in an English newspaper on a collector which aroused his curiosity. Both started studying old books on the art of projection and asked others. Laura turned to Janet Templin who became her teacher, while Mervyn traced down the person mentioned in the newspaper who introduced him to slides: Joe Milburn, one of the founder members of the British Magic Lantern Society. Laura, Mervyn and others started in the 1970s and the 1980s with re-enactments of the traditional show and brought the wonderful world of the magic lantern back to live. Mervyn Heard, his wife Chrissie and her colleague Cherry formed a company and toured through many countries. Laura Minici-Zotti, who also organised exhibitions and runs a museum in Padova, had as “lanternista” many successful programs. Passionately they not only gathered Victorian devices but also compiled knowledge on the staging, producing, distributing and presenting

slides. They did media-archaeology *avant la lettre*. They provided the ground on which research projects devoted to the optical lantern such as “A Million Pictures” are based on, to advance knowledge and discover new details of its rich history.



*Contemporary lanternists and performers.
Foto (top): Aad Kok during a show in Dickens
Theater Laren*

<http://www.dickenstheater.nl/>

*right: Lanternist Gwen Sebus and lecturer
Sarah Dellmann at a MLS meeting's show.*



About & Editorial

This newsletter informs about the activities of the project *A Million Pictures: Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefact in the Common European History of Learning*.

The magic lantern was the most important visual entertainment and means of instruction across nineteenth-century Europe. However, despite its pervasiveness across multiple scientific, educational and popular contexts, magic lantern slides remain under-researched. Although many libraries and museums across Europe hold tens of thousands of lantern slides in their collections, a lack of standards for documentation and preservation limits the impact of existing initiatives, hinders the recognition of the object's heritage value and potential exploitation. *A Million Pictures* addresses the sustainable preservation of this massive, untapped heritage resource.

A Million Pictures is a collaborative research project between researchers from Utrecht University (NL), University of Exeter (UK), University of Antwerp (BE), University of Girona (ES), University of Salamanca (ES) as well as twenty Associated Partners.

A Million Pictures runs from June 2015 until May 2018.

More information about past and present activities are available on our project website: www.uu.nl/a-million-pictures



A Million Pictures: Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefacts in the Common European History of Learning is a Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage – Heritage Plus project which is funded by NWO, Belspo, AHRC and MINECO and Co-Funded by the European Commission.



This document is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

This newsletter is edited by Sarah Dellmann, additional contributions by Frank Kessler, Sabine Lenk, Laura Minici-Zotti and Daniel Pitarch.